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*Der erste platonische Brief.* (Sonderabdruck aus *Philologus*, LXXII (N.F. XXVI), erstes Heft.) Von OTTO IMMISCH. Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1913. Pp. 41.

It would be claiming too much to affirm that Professor Immisch has here definitely disposed of the vexed question of the Platonic *Letters*. But he clearly indicates the method by which the problem must be attacked and offers the most plausible solution that has yet been proposed. He wastes no time in proving that the *Letters* in their present form could not have been written by Plato. The recent repeated reaffirmation by eminent scholars of the genuineness of the entire *corpus*, including the superstitious mysticism of ii and the disingenuousness of xiii, which Ficinus scorned to translate, is enough to make us despair of the progress of philology. Whatever genuine paragraphs or sentences they may contain, the *Letters* as they stand are the work of a compiler. To understand his work, argues Professor Immisch, we must ascertain his motive. The *Letters* are philosophical epistles, not biographical documents. In the tetralogies they are grouped with the *Laws*, and their intended supplemental relation to the political philosophy of the *Laws* resembles that of the *Epinomis* to the Institution of the Nocturnal Council. A much debated passage of the *Laws*, 739 A ff., distinguishes a first or ideal or paradeigmatic state, a second state, which is the "hypothetical" state of the *Laws*, and a third state-system or political theory which Plato seems to promise to expound, if old age allows. Professor Immisch argues that in Plato's view this third exposition of political theory would treat of the rectification or reformation by counsel or admonition, of existing erroneous or diseased governments. He shows that the *Epistles*, which contain much of this kind of admonition adapted to various political situations, might plausibly be regarded as the fulfilment of this program. That they were in fact so interpreted in later Platonic tradition he proves from Apuleius and a sentence of the so-called, 'Αλκινόου εισαγωγή, XXXIV, which I quote somewhat more fully than he does: ὑπογράφει δὲ καὶ ἄλλας πολιτείας ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, ὧν ἐστὶν ἡ τε ἐν Νόμοις καὶ ἡ ἐκ διορθώσεως ἐν Ἐπιστολαῖς ἢ χρηταὶ πρὸς τὰς νεοσηκυίας πόλεις τὰς ἐν τοῖς Νόμοις. The design indicated by these converging lines of argument he attributes to the compiler of the *Letters*. When was the collection made? Professor Immisch deduces a *terminus post quem* from the first letter, which obviously cannot be attributed either to Plato or to Dion, but which describes, he thinks, a definite historical situation too precisely to be dismissed as a mere rhetorical exercise. He finds this situation exactly reproduced in the relations of the Spartan Dexippus to Dionysius the Elder as described in Diodorus xiii. 85-96, to whom, therefore, he assigns the substance but not the present form of the letter. The rhetoric and display of sophistical erudition are too silly not only for the practical statesman Dexippus, but even for that "Pusillus Thucydides" Philistus. It is the kind of rhetorical *Umstilisierung*

which we look for in the *μειρακιῶδες* and *διατριβικόν* style of Timaeus, and as an ornament of his history composed at Athens after 317, we may plausibly conceive this precious epistle of Dexippus. Thence the compiler of the Platonic *Letters* took it, first because he had no epistles of Plato addressed to the elder Dionysius and, second, because it illustrates a necessary topic of the collection, the warnings, the admonitions to be addressed to one who is about to seize upon a tyranny. The compilation of the *Epistles* falls then somewhere between Timaeus and Aristophanes in the first half of the third century. The probable motive and the possible source of each letter are subjects for special investigations and the hypothesis of genuineness must be studied separately for each case, nay for each sentence.

Such are the main conclusions of this interesting paper, the value of which to the inquirer in this field is quite independent of his adhesion to some of its more venturesome combinations.

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